

The Marshall Plan: The Vision of a Family of Nations: Background Information and Guiding Questions

Diplomacy affects every person, every day

No one understood this better than the great American statesman George C. Marshall who used diplomacy to transform Western Europe after World War II from utter ruin to a continent of peaceful, prosperous nations.

The Marshall Plan: The Vision of a Family of Nations is a traveling exhibit of the United States Diplomacy Center, an office within the U.S. Department of State that is creating a new museum dedicated to the history, practice and challenges of the American diplomacy.

The Marshall Plan: The Vision of a Family of Nations was first exhibited to celebrate the restoration of the historic Hotel de Talleyrand building in Paris, where the postwar recovery program known as the Marshall Plan established its European offices.

The exhibition reminds visitors of the ingenuity of the Marshall Plan and how it served as the genesis of peacetime cooperation among former enemies. And the exhibition brings the words and images of this important history to U.S. audiences.

A major goal of the exhibition is to educate people about the ties between our nation and the countries of Europe, and to demonstrate how diplomacy can overcome enormous challenges and bring nations together through hard work, creativity and tenacity.

To prepare visitors of various ages and interests to view this exhibition, especially high school students studying government, or WWII and the Cold War, the following time line and guiding questions are meant to provide ideas for direct observation, analysis and discussion and to offer an opportunity to reflect on one of the most successful cases of international cooperation in modern times.

The following guiding questions will hone observation and analytical skills while introducing the history of the Marshall Plan. Diplomatic techniques used during the formulation and implementation of the Marshall Plan will also be discussed. Visitors will explore the motivating forces behind the Plan and how relationships that grew out of this effort continue to affect all of us today. Visitors to the exhibition will recognize the importance of the Marshall Plan for its economic creativity as well as its diplomatic foresight.

The goal of the Marshall Plan was to rebuild the destroyed communities of Europe and revitalize the Western European economy based on a capitalist market economy model.

The diplomatic methods used in developing, administering and implementing the Plan into action were three-pronged:

- **U.S.-to-Europe:** U.S. provided humanitarian aid to improve living conditions that declined as a result of war and worsened after the harsh winter 1947.
- **Nation-to-Nation:** The plan required Western European governments to work together. At a time before the European Union, those nations lacked diplomatic and economic institutions to facilitate cooperation. For the Plan to succeed, defeated Germany would also receive Marshall aid and sit at the negotiating table.
- **People-to-People:** Marshall Plan aid enabled Americans and Western Europeans to visit each other on the factory floors and in the fields to share ideas of production and cultural heritage.

What was the Marshall Plan?

Observe the images on the panels to respond to the following questions. The titles of the panels are listed for easy reference:

The images in **Restoring Health** and **Averting a Deepening Crisis** show how the Marshall Plan brought aid to Europe. Looking at these panels:

1. What kinds of help came with the Marshall Plan?
2. What goods were sent?
3. Who received the aid?
4. Why do you think Europe needed humanitarian aid?

Look at the images in **The Marshall Plan, Challenge and Response, Mutual Assistance, A New Way to Peace, Men of Good Will** that show how the Marshall Plan was designed:

1. How are these people working to put the Plan together?
2. Where are these people from?
3. These men represented their country and were considered important people in their government. Is there anything in the photos that reveal the importance of these men?
4. Challenge: **Find The Lives of the Hotel de Talleyrand** panel. Read why this building is significant to the Marshall Plan. How is this building related to the photos in **The Marshall Plan, Challenge and Response, Mutual Assistance, A New Way to Peace, Men of Good Will**?

In **Construction & Reconstruction** and **Roads For Recovery** look for pictures that show people working:

1. What are they doing?
2. What materials do you think they are using to do their work?
3. What equipment might they be using?
4. What are the workers rebuilding?
5. Why do you think these infrastructures needed to be rebuilt?
6. Challenge: Look at the top left image(s) on panel **Construction & Reconstruction**. What do you notice about the two images? How are they similar and/or different? Are they of the same place? How do you know?

Reaping a Greater Harvest, Modernizing Industry, and Projects of Power show how the Marshall Plan brought new technologies to Europe:

1. What were the new technologies the Plan brought to Europe?
2. In what industries might these technologies be used?
3. Who would have used or operated these technologies?
4. How do you think these new technologies reinvigorated the economy?
5. How do you think these new technologies changed the lives of Europeans?
6. Challenge: Look at the top picture on **Reaping a Greater Harvest**. What "technology" do you see in the picture? What is "powering" the plough? Is this a "new technology"? Read the caption to the photo. Where is the mule from? Did you know that Marshall Plan money brought U.S. mules to Europe?!

The **Creative Financing: The Counterpart Funds and Revitalizing the Economy** panels show that the Marshall Plan invigorated the European and U.S. economies by helping countries trade their goods. Find the photo in one of the panels that says "Pigs for Porcelain":

1. What were the tea sets traded for?
2. Where were the tea sets sold?
3. Look at the other pictures on the panel. Where do you think the tea sets were made?

Look at **People to People Diplomacy**:

1. What seems to be the focus of the people in each of the photos?
2. By reading the captions, where are the people from? Are they from different places?
3. Besides the information about the combine, cow and generator, what else do you think is being shared?

In the photo captions in **Reaping a Greater Harvest, Modernizing Industry, Projects of Power, Roads for Recovery, Construction & Reconstruction** and **Averting a Deepening Crisis**:

1. Find the names of European countries whose citizens are in the photos. These are some of the countries that participated in the Marshall Plan.
2. Find a complete list of European countries that participated in the Plan in the **Mutual Assistance** panel. These countries formed the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC).
3. What other European countries do you know of that were not a part of the Marshall Plan?

Analyze images:

Based on the images you've observed, what do you think about the following?

1. How did WWII affect Europe?
2. How do you think the Marshall Plan aid helped transition Europe after the war?
3. How did the Marshall Plan improve aid and trade/global relations?

What is diplomacy?

1. Look at **Challenge and Response, Mutual Assistance, A New Way to Peace, Men of Good Will**. Find an image that shows people designing the Marshall Plan.
2. Look at **People to People Diplomacy, Reaping a Greater Harvest, Modernizing Industry, Roads for Recovery, Construction & Reconstruction** and **Averting a Deepening Crisis**. Find an image that shows people working with people, putting the Marshall Plan into action. These are images of diplomacy at work.
3. How are they different?
4. How are they similar?
5. If you had to name these two different forms of diplomacy, what would they be?

Further discussion:

Read the text of **The Marshall Plan, Challenge and Response, Mutual Assistance, A New Way to Peace, Men of Good Will** to respond the following questions (Also remember to draw on information from the images):

Vision of the Plan:

1. What were the concerns of Europe after WWII?
2. What were the concerns of the U.S. after WWII?
3. What did Marshall see as the biggest problem?
4. What did Marshall offer to Europe?
5. How did he do this?
6. How did this challenge Europe?

Making of the Plan:

1. How did Europe go about asking for U.S. aid?
2. Who contributed to these decisions?
3. What was the role of the U.S.?
4. How did this influence how the European countries related with each other?
5. How was this procedure different than how these countries previously solved problems?
6. How did the U.S. want West Germany involved with the Marshall Plan?
7. How did Western Europe feel about this?
8. The Marshall Plan promoted a capitalistic economy and opposed communism. Referring to the exhibit, how did the Marshall Plan counter communism?
9. What has been the lasting affect in Europe as a result of the OEEC?

Interpret: What do you think about Diplomacy and the Marshall Plan:

1. Would you call the Marshall Plan a successful diplomatic effort? Why or why not?
2. How was the exchange between the U.S. and Europe beneficial to both?
3. How do you think the Marshall Plan affected U.S. citizens?
4. How do you think the Marshall Plan served the American public and their economy?
5. How do you think the Marshall Plan affected Europe?
6. How do you think the affects of the Marshall Plan are felt today?

Please feel free to respond with questions or comments about the exhibit or teaching guide to USDC@state.gov

THANK YOU

Important Events to Remember

September 1939: Germany invades Poland and WWII begins.

May 1945: Victory in Europe.

July 1945: Truman, Churchill, Stalin meet at Potsdam – agree that East and West Germany should be reunited and draw up plans for establishing new, disarmed, de-Nazified Germany.

September 1945: Victory in Japan.

October 1945: Founding of the United Nations

February 1946: George Kennan sends Long Telegram from Moscow Embassy to Washington elaborating on the growing Soviet threat to international stability and U.S. interests. It is recommended that the Soviets be “contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points” rather than negotiation.

March 1947: Truman outlines the “Truman Doctrine” in an address to Congress – the president committed the United States to assisting peoples threatened by an oppressive ideology or political regime.

June 1947: Secretary of State George C. Marshall announces U.S. willingness to assist European nations in need if they formulated formal requests for reconstruction. His vision comes to be known as Marshall Plan.

Summer 1947: European nations meet to formulate requests for European Recovery Program (ERP). The Committee on European Economic Cooperation is established. Soviets chose not to participate and discourage Eastern European nations under their influence from doing so.

April 1948: Congress passes the Economic Cooperation Act, formally approving appropriations for the ERP. Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) established in Europe.

October 1948: State Department establishes administrative structure for Marshall Aid and advises the creation of a new agency, the Economic Cooperation Administration, to oversee it.

May 1948: Congress of Europe meeting in The Hague; Western European nations pave the way for European Union.

April 1949: NATO Treaty signed by U.S., Canada and 10 Western European nations.

June 1950: The Korean War begins. This prompts U.S. to slowly begin to focus more on international defense buildup rather than economic assistance. NATO countries pressured to focus on rearmament as well.

April 1951: Schuman Plan creates European Coal and Steel Community, a basis for Western European economic cooperation. Most importantly, it includes Germany as a sovereign nation.

Mid- 1952: Marshall Aid expires as planned. Congress does not renew funding for the ECA, but passes Mutual Security Act through which assistance continues to pass to Western Europe but with a greater focus on defense production.

Suggested Sources for Marshall Plan

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